

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT, USDA  
1999 JUL 28 P 2:05  
COPIES: \_\_\_\_\_

## Request for Moratorium on Genetically Engineered Foods

Dan Glickman, Secretary of Agriculture  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
14th & Independence Ave. SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Mr. Secretary:

In light of the risk of genetically engineered foods to Monarch butterflies, and other possible health and environmental hazards, I am writing to ask you to place an immediate moratorium on the planting of all genetically engineered crops. I'm also requesting that your agency stop approving new genetically altered foods until sufficient study has been completed to determine their safety.

As you're no doubt aware, scientists from Cornell University recently discovered that corn genetically engineered to produce the insecticide Bt has an unwitting side effect: it kills Monarch butterflies. In laboratory tests, nearly half of the Monarch caterpillars that ate milkweed leaves dusted with Bt corn pollen died within four days, compared with no deaths among caterpillars that ate milkweed leaves free of the Bt pollen.

Already, this Bt corn has been planted on 20 million acres of American farmland, imperiling the millions of monarch butterflies that travel on their annual spring migration from Mexico to Canada. Scientists are also concerned that the Bt corn may harm some of the 19 butterfly and moth species already on the endangered species list.

The Bt toxin also may pose risks to human health. Bt remains in the cell structure of the plants and is deadly enough to kill insects. We are being told these foods are safe for human consumption, but we have heard that before about DDT and many other pesticides later shown to be cancer causing. I do not want to eat genetically engineered foods that contain the Bt toxin. Nor do I want to eat "Roundup Ready" soybeans or other future products such as tomatoes that contain fish genes.

The Cornell study is further evidence that genetically engineered foods are being released into our environment too quickly, without adequate testing to determine their environmental consequences. Please call an immediate moratorium on the planting of genetically engineered crops and stop approving new genetically engineered foods until sufficient study has been completed to determine their safety.

Please write back to me and let me know if you intend to implement these regulations.

Sincerely,

Lairdon Schmitt (signature)

Lairdon Schmitt (print name)

77 Not Plains Rd. (address)

Guilford CT 06437 (city, state, zip)

92N-0139

C6150

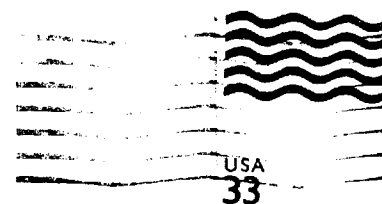
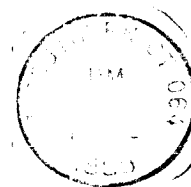
P.S.

My apologies for relying on a form letter to make you aware of my position regarding what I feel is a very important issue. I just want to add here that I make the strongest objection to the use, by US officials and members of Congress, of international trade conventions (GATT, NAFTA, WTO protocols) to force genetically engineered food products onto the markets of countries whose people and governments have taken steps to label or restrict such products. The upholding by another country of a higher standard of public health or food regulation does not constitute a barrier to trade. The US government has no business applying trade sanctions to such nations in an effort to force them to purchase US agricultural products that do not meet their domestic standards. If US producers want their products to go to markets abroad, it is incumbent on them to meet whatever labeling requirements or restrictions on methods of production are in force in those markets. If other countries make strong objections to US products, as Britain, other EU nations, and Australia have in the case of genetically engineered foodstuffs, perhaps it is time that US officials, instead of automatically moving to protect the interest of US manufacturers and producers, reexamine their policies regarding these issues.

Sincerely,

Laird Schmitt

Schmitt  
77 Nut Plains Rd.  
Guilford CT 06437



Dan Glickman, Secy of Agriculture  
U.S. Dept. of Agriculture  
14<sup>th</sup> & Independence Ave SW  
Washington D.C.  
20250

